

KEEP YOUR CLAIM ON TRACK

Many injured workers get their benefits quickly, with no trouble at all. Others face problems and delays. This page gives tips on how to take charge of your case and make sure your rights are protected.

Whether or not you have a problem:

- **Keep good records.** You will probably fill out and receive many forms and other papers. Keep copies of *everything*, including envelopes showing postmarks!
 - Keep notes of all discussions you have with the people involved in your claim.
 - Keep track of your medical condition and how it affects your ability to work.
 - Request in writing that the claims administrator give you copies of all medical reports and other documents.
 - Save pay stubs and time sheets before and after your injury showing your income, the dates you worked, and when you were off work.
 - Keep records of any out-of-pocket expenses that workers' compensation could cover (like prescriptions or travel costs to medical appointments).
- **Learn more about workers' compensation.** The laws and procedures in workers' compensation are complicated. What applies to another injured worker may not apply to you. Learn what your rights are, and don't be afraid to ask questions. Use the resources in Chapter 9.

If you have a concern, speak up. See whether **your employer** or **the claims administrator** can agree to resolve the problem. If this doesn't work, don't delay getting help. Try the following:

- **Contact an Information & Assistance officer.** State I&A officers answer questions and help injured workers. They may provide information and forms and help resolve problems. Some I&A officers hold workshops for injured workers. For more information, see pages 70-72, or go to www.dwc.ca.gov. To contact a local office, check the Government Pages at the front of the white pages of your phone book. Look under: State Government Offices/Industrial Relations/Workers' Compensation.
- **Consult an attorney.** Lawyers who represent injured workers in their workers' compensation cases are called applicants' attorneys. Their job is to protect your rights, plan a strategy for your case, gather information to support your claim, keep track of deadlines, and represent you in hearings before a workers' compensation judge. For more information, see pages 73-

74. You can get names of applicants' attorneys from the State Bar of California (1-415-538-2120; website: www.calbar.ca.gov), a local bar association, or the California Applicants' Attorneys Association (1-800-648-3132 within California; website: www.caaa.org).

- **Contact your union.** Your union may be able to help resolve problems, tell you about other benefits, negotiate changes needed in your job, protect you from job discrimination, and refer you to legal services.
- **Represent yourself.** If you can't get help from the above resources, you can prepare your own case and request a hearing before a workers' compensation judge. For instructions, contact an Information & Assistance officer (see above).